

WATER AND SEDIMENT QUALITY SUBCOMMITTEE GALVESTON BAY COUNCIL

Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, March 10, 2021
1:30PM – 3:30PM

Subcommittee Chair: Brian Koch, Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB)

Subcommittee Vice Chair: Justin Bower, Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC)

GBEP Representative: Christian N. Rines

Call to Order, Introductions

Attendees: Brian Koch (TSSWCB), Justin Bower (H-GAC), Christian Rines (GBEP), Ryan Bare (HARC), Brian Eastham (TPWD), Erin Kinney (HARC), Christie Taylor (TX A&M AgriLife), Zulimar Lucena (USGS), Mike Lee (USGS), Mac Martin (TFS), Gordon Pederson (GCWDA), Gerrad Hofmans (TCEQ), Kristen McGovern (GBEP), Lindsey Lippert (GBEP), Celina Gauthier Lowry (TX A&M AgriLife), Kelli Ondracek (HPARD), Linda Shead (Shead Conservation Solutions), Shane Simpson (SJRA), Brian DeSanti (TX GLO), Rachel Windham (H-GAC), Jason Pinchback (TX GLO), Nick Ellis (GBF), Kendall Guidroz (H-GAC), Charlotte Cisneros (GBF), Laura Ryckman (TCEQ), Kimber De Salvo Anderson (TIRN).

Approval of December 9, 2020 minutes – Ms. Rines opened the meeting with approval of the minutes. A motion was requested for approval. Mr. Pederson moved to approve the minutes, and Mr. Bower seconded the motion. The minutes were approved with no changes.

Presentation and Discussion: “Baseline Assessment of Microplastics in Galveston Bay” – Zulimar Lucena, United States Geological Survey

Presentation: “The Role of Forests and Trees in Urban Watershed Management” – Mac Martin, Texas A&M Forest Service

Open Discussion: Impacts/observations of recent Winter Storm Uri
**Presentations, notes, and Q&A available upon request.*

Old Business

Project Updates from WSQ Project Mangers:

- Implementation of Watershed Protection Plan for Double Bayou (HARC) – Mr. Bare announced that the Partnership has not been able to meet with stakeholders in-person due to Covid, so the team has been transitioning to more of a digital platform for stakeholders. Several presentations have been created and uploaded to the website. The team plans to create more digital content that will soon be posted to the website. A special thanks to Ms. Guidroz with H-GAC for putting together a Coastal Communities video update. The team at HARC also provided an update for the website. USGS has continued collecting samples in the watershed and so the project is now shifting into more of an analysis phase. Mr. Koch announced that work has continued despite the challenges posed by the pandemic. Work toward improving Ag. Nonpoint Source issues and work in Cedar Bayou continues.
- Targeted Bacteria Monitoring (BPA thru H-GAC) – Ms. Guidroz announced that the fall 2020 SCA interns presented at the December WSQ Subcommittee meeting. The team was able to complete Plum Creek, so a full Assessment Unit of sampling. They identified 21 different spots where *E. Coli* levels were above the state standard for a single grab. Four of those samples were considered a serious concern, measuring in at 20,000 CFU/100 mL. The information was compiled into a report at the end of 2020 and submitted to the City of Houston Health Department and Public Works. No response to the findings has been received. No update is expected anytime soon, with the City concentrating on the effects of Winter Storm Uri. BPA is currently interviewing the next round of SCA interns for the next phase of monitoring.
- Occurrence of Microplastics in Tributaries to Galveston Bay (USGS) – Ms. Lucena announced that approximately 70% of the samples have been collected. Sample analysis is awaiting Agreement and QAPP Amendments to reflect a change in the contracted lab. The remaining 30% are event samples.
- Baseline Assessment of Microplastics in Galveston Bay (USGS) – Ms. Lucena announced that the QAPP is currently out for signature for approval. Once approved the team will begin to collect samples in Galveston Bay.
- Dickinson Bayou/Highland Bayou Watershed Protection Plan (WPP) (TCWP) – No Dickinson Bayou update. Ms. Gauthier Lowry announced that the Highland Bayou WPP has moved to EPA for review. The Galveston Bay Coalition of Watersheds for Galveston and Brazoria Counties has met to discuss different education and outreach opportunities for the watershed, to be implemented between now and Thanksgiving 2021.
- Cypress Creek and Spring Creek WPPs (H-GAC) – Mr. Bower announced that Cypress Creek is wrapping up the WPP and have completed the

period of review with its stakeholders. A special thank you to Tom Douglas for the great amount of time spent reviewing the document. It will hopefully be sent up to the EPA in the next few weeks after TCEQ has given their approval. The team will also soon be launching a project in Clear Creek, so be on the lookout for that, should Mr. Bower contact you. Ms. Windham announced that modeling results for the Spring Creek WPP have been approved by the steering committee. The team will now start discussing water quality improvement strategies with stakeholders that they'd like to see implemented in the Spring Creek watershed, as well as creating a project timeline. The next Partnership meeting will be held April. A registration link was provided in the meeting chat.

- Outreach Implementation for Galveston Bay Water Quality Projects (H-GAC) – Ms. Rines announced that the contract was recently executed, and the contract initiation meeting will be held tomorrow.
- BIG I-Plan/Basins 11/Cotton Bayou (H-GAC)/ – BIG I-Plan: No update. Basin 11: No update. Cotton Bayou: Ms. Windham announced that the project is in an “in-between” phase. The characterization report was completed at the end of last year. The team is now working to develop a technical support document and the TMDL for the watershed in 2021.
- Green Infrastructure for Texas (TCWP) – No update.

New Business

Subcommittee Discussion: Ms. Rines opened a discussion to collect input from the group as to what needs or gaps they'd like to add to the current list to help steer the conversation. No recommendations received.

Mr. Koch mentioned that he hasn't really been on the ground to see any issues in the watershed. Ms. Rines interjected that she's noticed construction ramping back up with lots of tree clearing and impervious surfaces going in.

Ms. Shead suggested that targeted monitoring be added as a need for the group.

Ms. Rines welcomed the idea of incorporating more urban forest components into watershed-based plans. Mr. Martin agreed, adding that increased runoff causes an increase in sedimentation rates. This impacts flow and can contribute to all sorts of issues.

Watershed Partnership Updates/Roundtable:

- Mr. Pinchback announced the Clean Coast Texas Program officially launched back in January. Part of this project's implementation includes a series of “lunch-n-learns” that will focus on Texas coastal water quality issues. A link to the meeting was provided in the chat. The first presentation in the series will cover the Texas Beach Watch and its data over the last 11 years and other metadata. A new website has been

launched for the project at www.cleancoast.texas.gov. He also mentioned that H-GAC will be speaking at the next lunch-n-learn.

- Ms. Guidroz announced that Trash Bash 2021 is a virtual "Backyard to Bay" cleanup this year encouraging personal cleanups in your own neighborhood. All the information and the schedule (March 25-28) is on www.trashbash.org.

Galveston Bay Estuary Program, council, and subcommittee updates:

- Ms. Rines announced a vacancy within GBEP. A job announcement will be sent out with the meeting follow-up notes.

Upcoming GBEP meetings:

NRU Subcommittee Meeting - TBD

PPE Subcommittee Meeting - April 1, 2021, 10:00am - 12:00pm

B&P Subcommittee Meeting - April 6, 2021, 9:00am - 11:00am

GBC Meeting - April 21, 2021, 9:30am -12:30pm

Next Quarterly WSQ Meeting - June 9, 2021, 1:30pm - 3:30pm

Fall WSQ Meeting - September 8, 2021, 1:30pm - 3:30pm

Winter WSQ Meeting - December 8, 2021, 1:30pm - 3:30pm

Adjourn